COMIC SHOP NEWS™

1160

Casper and the Spectrals

the BRAVE and the BOLD

Comics superstar

J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI

takes over DC's greatest team-up title

Art by

JESUS SAIZ

Beginning with #27

SEPTEMBER 2009

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Ardden Gets in the Spirit with Casper & Co.

It's been years since he last haunted the pages of a new comic book, but this fall one of the most popular ghosts in comics history is returning—and he's bringing along some beloved friends!

Ardden Entertainment is bringing back Casper the Friendly Ghost, Wendy the Good Little Witch, and Hot Stuff—not in three separate series, but in one new book, ***Casper and the Spectrals***, which will reach comic shops just in time for Casper's sixtieth anniversary (but what's sixty years when you're a ghost?).

Casper and the Spectrals offers a fresh, contemporary take on Harvey Comics' classic characters, courtesy of comics veteran and Ardden Entertainment editor-in-chief *JM DeMatteis* and Ardden Entertainment co-founder *Brendan Deneen*, who provided the concept. The series is written by *Todd Dezago* and illustrated by *Pedro Delgado*.

DeMatteis told ***Comic Shop News*** how the story developed. "***Casper*** came about in a very casual way," he said. "I saw something that reminded me how much I enjoyed the character when I was a kid and thought it would be great if Ardden could do a new spin on the character. I mentioned it to *Brendan Deneen* and *Rich Emms*, Ardden's co-publishers, and they loved the idea. Brendan and I immediately started bouncing around story concepts and then Brendan inquired about the rights, which, we were happy to discover, were available...and we were off and running."

"I don't remember who first mentioned it, but I think *JM DeMatteis* was talking about the idea of revisiting ***Casper*** and the two of us quickly came up with a bigger story that would star not only Casper but also Wendy and Hot Stuff," *Brendan Deneen* added. "These three characters seemed like the perfect match up for a big adventure story, personality-wise. Once we had the idea, we approached Classic Media and the rest, as they say, is history!"

Writer *Todd Dezago* explained how he became involved in the project. "When ***Casper*** came up at Ardden, my old pal and Spider-Man brother-in-arms *JM DeMatteis* emailed me and asked if I'd be interested, but he wasn't yet at liberty to tell me what the project was. I said yes just to have a chance to work with him again. When he was finally able to tell me it was ***Casper***, I was rocked!

"J.M. and Brendan had already put together an outline for the story when I came aboard, and they'd done a fantastic job of taking all the well-loved, traditional elements of Casper and his friends—his world—and infusing them with the energy of today's storytelling," Dezago continued. "They have skillfully brought Casper into the 21st century! My job was to build on the premise and inject as much Casper-y fun into it as I could!"

The ***Casper*** assignment offered Dezago an opportunity to revisit an old friend. "I grew up watching the ***Casper*** cartoons and loved him! I think I was Casper for my first Halloween, with one of those plastic Ben Cooper masks that you could barely breathe out of and the obligatory white smock that had a picture of Casper and his name on it just in case no one knew who you were with that big white mask on. I read the comics in the barber shop and would stay there long after my haircut was done to finish reading everything they had. No doubt about it— I'm old school Casper!"

While the comic has a modern look, DeMatteis stressed that ***Casper and the Spectrals'*** Casper, Wendy, and Hot Stuff are also "old school Casper" in terms of their personalities. "The characters in ***Casper and the Spectrals*** are, in essence, very much the same as the ones we've known for years," DeMatteis explained. "As far as I'm concerned, Casper, Wendy, and Hot Stuff are just fine as they are. We're not suddenly making Casper brooding and moody or Wendy into some punk kid with attitude. But what we are doing is taking those three classic characters and the wonderful world they inhabit and updating it all, making it feel more contemporary. What's the point of doing a 1950's Casper in 2009?"

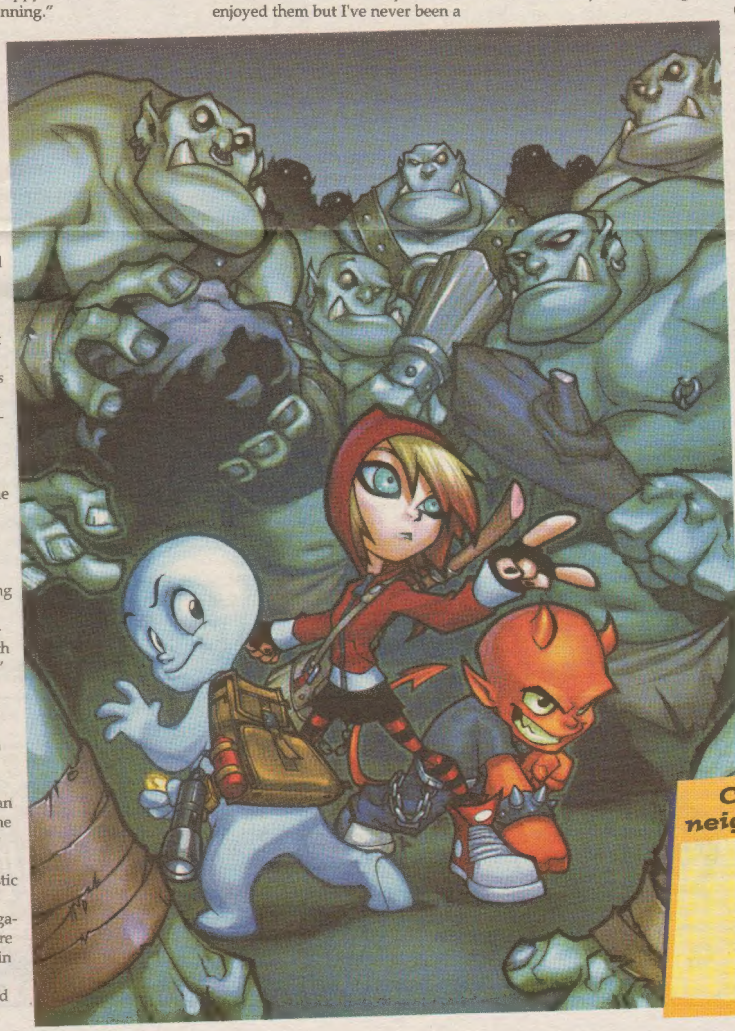
Not only are the characters being updated, but so is the story structure: gone are the multiple short tales in each issue. "Brendan and I both agreed that we didn't want fun little short stories, we wanted a full-length story with some meat on it, one that would explore the characters, and the whole Casper mythos, a little more deeply," DeMatteis said. "Something reminiscent of ***Ghostbusters***, where there's comedy mixed with some genuine scares and thrills."

"I read all of the Harvey Comics as a kid and always enjoyed them but I've never been a huge fan of one- or two-page stories that end with a little joke," Deneen added. "I'm more of a three-act story guy, which has only become more so the case as I've worked in and around Hollywood."

"We also wanted to deepen the characters a little," DeMatteis said. "If you look at modern animation—with Pixar as the perfect example—you see stories that are totally kid-friendly and, like the best children's literature, have depth of character, real emotion and complexity of story. That's what we're aiming for here. Not a *re-imagining*, but an *updating*. Very much in line with what Brendan has done writing our ***Flash Gordon*** series. He's stayed absolutely true to the essence of *Alex Raymond's* characters and universe, yet he's brought a fresh, modern spin to the story."

Deneen agrees that "***Flash Gordon*** is largely an all-ages comic. My young nephews read and love it. I've actively worked to have no swearing and no gory violence in the book. I love the idea of all-ages comic books. While my comic book writing debut, ***Scatterbrain***, was as R-rated as they come, I do think the comic industry should work as hard as possible to get kids reading comics."

"So rest assured that this is *still* Classic Casper: totally kid-friendly, with lots of laughs and fun," DeMatteis said. "The last thing we wanted to do was some kind of 'adultifying' of Casper. 'He's young, he's dead, he's sexy...he's Casper!' No, no, a *thousand* times no!"



Does Deneen have any theories as to what makes Casper, Wendy, and Hot Stuff so perpetually popular? "I think there's something about the mix of innocence and the supernatural that really resonates with people," Deneen replied. "It's not completely dissimilar to books like ***Harry Potter*** or ***Twilight***. These are innocent characters who are part of a larger mystical world. That's exactly what we're trying to build on in with ***Casper and the Spectrals***. For Casper especially, this miniseries will see a true character arc develop."

What is the relationship between Casper, Wendy, and Hot Stuff in this series, and what led to the decision to unite in a single tale? "We very much wanted this to be a 'shared universe' kind of story, where these wonderful characters can have an adventure together," DeMatteis said, "and we can encounter other members of the classic Casper cast in a natural way. Where ghosts and devils, witches and ogres, can all be part of the same landscape.

"In our story, Casper, Wendy and Hot Stuff are all outcasts who don't quite fit in. When they find each other, they find—for the first time ever—kindred spirits (no pun intended!) that understand what it feels like to be different, to not fit in within the strict social structures of Spooky Town. Then, of course, they're plunged into a Grand Adventure, with the fate of Spooky Town and the human world hanging in the balance."

Dezago offered more details on the storyline. "We learn about Spooky Town and that other-dimensional realm--just a heartbeat away from our real world--where Casper and his Spectral friends reside. We find out why it's vital for them to have to scare humanity--the fear-energy keeps an ancient evil

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imprisoned--and the reasons why that solution, which has worked for so many years, needs to be re-evaluated. 'Cause the evil get out...!

"Mostly it's a story about Casper and Wendy--and to some degree, Hot Stuff--and we get a chance see them meet for the first time and become friends. They are both sensitive kids who have some reservations about terrorizing people as a way of life and look to find a better way."

Will there be any solo tales—as backups, perhaps? "Not this time around, but we'd love to do some down the line," DeMatteis said. "***Casper and the Supernaturals*** is a three issue mini series. If it's successful, we want to do lots more with these characters."

All three characters have also been given a visual updating. "That idea to update the look was something we discussed early on, and the folks at Classic Media were very much behind the idea," DeMatteis said. "In fact, they kept urging us to take it as far as we could. In the end, this is 2009, not 1960; there's a whole generation of kids who relate to stories and storytelling in new ways. They don't know anything about Casper or his world or his history. That's the audience we really want to hook.

"That said, there's nothing in this series that will alienate fans of the classic Casper. Oh, I'm sure some people will complain about the change in the look. That's inevitable. There's a certain segment of the audience that's always going to. (And sometimes I'm right there with them!) But others will be excited about it. As noted earlier, we're not looking to change the characters so much as to add new dimensions to them and make them accessible to a modern audience."

How do you make Casper, Wendy, and Hot Stuff appealing to new readers and not just to nostalgia buffs who remember the originals? "In the end, it all comes down to a good story, well told," DeMatteis said. "*Todd Dezago* is a wonderful writer—I've known him since we worked together on Spider-Man, back in the day—and I was delighted when he signed on for the project. He has a terrific sense of Casper and his world and I think he's nailed the perfect balance between the classic stories and a fresh take.

"I feel the same about *Pedro Delgado's* art. Pedro worked his butt off on these new designs, seeking—and finding—that same balance. And I think readers will agree with me once ***Casper and the Spectrals*** hits the shops."

While best known for his superhero work (both solo and in collaboration with *Keith Giffen)* and his sophisticated horror/fantasy work such as *Moonshadow* and ***Blood: A Tale***, DeMatteis is certainly no stranger to all-ages storytelling. "I've been passionate about doing kid-friendly comics for many years (I pitched the original version of ***The Stardust Kid*** to DC way back in the 80's) and both ***Stardust Kid*** and ***Abadazad*** were my heartfelt attempts to do smart, high-quality, kid-friendly material. I'm a *huge* fan of children's literature—in fact, I just finished a children's fantasy novel called ***Imaginalis*** that will be out next year—and I've always wanted to bring more of that sensibility to comics.

"For too long the comic book business has pushed kids to the fringes. The truth is, I'd be afraid to give most mainstream super-hero comics to a random nine-year-old. There's nothing I'd like better than to edit an entire line of kid-friendly titles, ranging from licensed properties like ***Casper*** to originals like ***Abadazad***. If that day comes, I will be one very happy writer-editor.

"I'm delighted to see that other people are feeling the same way and that there are more and more kid-friendly titles appearing (*Mike Bullock's* ***Lions, Tigers, and Bears*** comes immediately to mind—what a wonderful series!)."

DeMatteis is pleased to see growth in the all-ages comics market, and hopes to see it continues. "The most important thing we can do to encourage that trend is to do first-rate material. Comics that kids will love and (equally important) that their parents will enjoy reading with them. And then we've got to promote it, promote it, promote it. I think we've got to make the whole business more family friendly. Wouldn't it be great if every shop had its own children's section, the same way that every Barnes and Noble does? A safe place for kids and their parents to explore the world of comics?"

If the book does as well as Ardden hopes, will there be further ***Casper and the Spectrals*** projects? "I certainly hope so! That's an ongoing conversation we're having with Classic," Deneen said.

And if that happens, will Dezago remain on board? "I'd be thrilled to be able to play with Casper and his friends more! As is usually the case, while writing this, I thought of about a dozen 'Further Adventures' stories that I would love to be able to take the kids through!"

Casper and the Spectrals #1, a $2.9 comic, is scheduled for late October release from Ardden Entertainment.

COMIC SHOP NEWSARAMA

Produced by *Comic Shop News* in cooperation with *newsarama.com*

Ring Us Up!

•Remember those ***Blackest Night*** promotional rings that we told you about last week? Well, the plan has changed somewhat—and it's even better now! First off, retailers will be able to order twice as many rings once they reach the various incentive levels that DC has set, which translates to a much greater opportunity for collectors to find the rings they want. Most importantly, though DC has moved the shipping schedule up: now the promotional rings are slated to arrive in stores along with the ***Blackest Night*** tie-in books to which their orders are pegged.

Here's the list of tie-in books, the ring colors attached to each ,and the date you can expect to find 'em in comic shops. (Be sure to check with the friendly folks at your local comic shop for info on availability and qualification requirements!)

•***Doom Patrol #4*** (11/4), Yellow Ring.
•***Booster Gold #26*** (11/11), Orange Ring.
•***R.E.B.E.L.S. #10*** (11/11), Indigo Ring.
•***Adventure Comics #4*** (11/18), Blue Ring.
•***Outsiders #24*** (11/18), Violet Ring.
•***Blackest Night #5*** (11/25), Green Ring.
•***Justice League #39*** (11/25), Red Ring.

Skip Trace

In the past couple of weeks, Diamond has announced the return of something that we haven't seen in eleven years: a skip week. It's been so long, in fact, that some of you might not even know what a skip week *is*—so we thought we'd offer you a rundown on what the phrase means and why it's happening this year.

As you might expect, a skip week is a week in which no new comics are shipped. It's something that no one likes in any phase of the industry likes, but this is one of those rare situations in which it's unavoidable.

Here's the reason why: before you pick up your comics at your friendly neighborhood comic shop every week, those book do a whole lot of travelling. They travel from the printer to the distributor, then they travel from the distributor to the retailer. The primary agent for the last part of your comics' trek is UPS; the majority of the stores are three days away from the warehouse that handles their books, so the books you see in your shop in the US on Wednesday actually began their odyssey on the prior Friday.

The problem this year, though, is that Christmas and New Years Day are on Friday; the last time this occurred was 1998, and there was a skip week that year, too. You may not know this, but UPS doesn't pick up commercial shipments on Christmas Eve (although they do make last-minute deliveries on that day), and they neither pick up nor deliver on New Years Eve. That means that not only could shipments not leave the warehouse on their typical Friday, but they couldn't even leave one day earlier on Thursday, either.

If Diamond waited and shipped the books out the Monday after Christmas, they'd get part of the way there, and then they'd sit in a truck or a hub over the Thursday-through-Sunday New Years holiday weekend, finally arriving in comic shops on Monday, January 4th... just two days before the next shipment arrived. That would double the workload and the shipping expense, which would create even more problems.

So Diamond and the publishers have decided to make the best of a bad thing by having publishers rearrange their schedules to avoid releasing any books that week. Instead, the books that might have arrived that day will be scheduled for Wednesday, December 23rd, or Wednesday, January 6th.

by Cliff Biggers

SPIDER-MAN

BY STAN LEE & LARRY LIEBER

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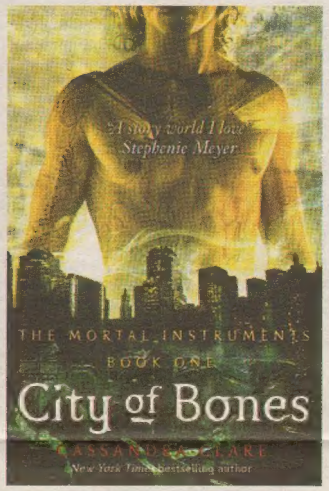
Does that mean huge shipping weeks on those days? Not necessarily. Usually, the monthly comics schedule is spread out over four Wednesdays—and even with no books shipping on December 30th, there are still four Wednesdays in December (the 2nd, the 9th, the 16th, and the 23rd). So you can expect the usual fourth-week release schedule on December 23rd, just as on October 28th or November 25th.

Of course, the good thing about a skip week is that it offers readers a chance to catch up on all those great books they've been meaning to try—and some publishers are working on plans to offer a little something special on December 30th to make it worth your while to make a trip into your local comic shop! More on that later...



The Instruments of Their Success

Th3rd World Publishing, the company responsible for the acclaimed ***The Stuff of Legend,*** has signed an agreement with Del Rey Books: not only will Del Rey publish the ***Stuff of Legend*** collected volume, but Th3rd World has the rights adapt a number of novels published by Del Rey, beginning with the bestselling series ***The Mortal Instruments*** by *Cassandra Clare*.

"When the book was recommended to us, to be honest, I wasn't sure what to expect," Th3rd World publisher *Michael DeVito* said, but after reading the books, he realized that "there is a little bit of everything in there, and I think unlike a lot of what is available in the comic format, it appeals to both male and female readers pretty equally, which was something I found really interesting. There is action, mystery, romance, you name it. Fans of everything from ***Star Wars*** to ***Harry Potter*** to ***Twilight*** to horror movies should find something here to like and then some."

•*J. Scott Campbell* is supplying the cover art for a previously-unannounced variant cover for ***Amazing Spider-Man #606;*** this cover is strictly limited to three per store.

Set in New York, books focus on the "Shadowhunters," human-angel hybrids that hunt down demons while also keeping peace between the warlocks, vampires, werewolves, faeries and other mythical creatures who inhabit the Earth. So far, three novels have been released: ***City of Bones,*** ***City of Glass,*** and ***City of Ashes.***

"This series adaptation has the potential to bring a whole new crowd of readers to our titles and possibly comics in genera," DeVito said. "On the other side of the fence, long time comic fans who pick up the comics will hopefully want to take the next step and read the books," he said.

Look for ***The Mortal Instruments*** to debut in 2010, about the same time as the Del Rey collected volume of ***The Stuff of Legend*** is slated for release.

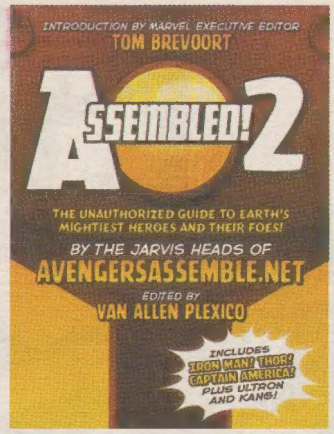
Assembling Another Avengers Tome

Think you're a major Avengers fan? Well, you've got nothing on *Van Allen Plexico* and his fellow "Jarvis Heads," who have put their love for the superteam on paper with the Avengers reference book ***Assembled!***—and they're doing it again later this year with the release of ***Assembled! 2,*** a second volume of analysis and commentary.

"The focus of ***Assembled! 2*** is on analyzing and discussing 'The Big Three' Avengers-- Iron Man, Thor, and Captain America-- plus the 'Big Two' villains, Ultron and Kang," editor *Van Plexico* told ***CSN.*** "We're analyzing the main characters, both good and evil. What makes each of them tick? How have their relationships toward one another evolved over the years, through events such as the Kree-Skrull War or Civil War? The book also discusses the ***Iron Man*** movie, plus ***Young Avengers, Avengers Forever,*** and more."

How'd these two books come about? "I started the ***Avengers Assemble!*** website and mailing list way back in 1995, leading to the gathering of the Jarvis Heads- longtime and hardcore Avengers fans from around the world.

"In 2007 I suggested we Jarvis Heads put together ***Assembled!***, with chapters discussing the good and the bad of the different writer/artist 'eras' of the book (Lee/Kirby; Shooter/Perez, etc). It also included a good


INTRODUCTION BY MARVEL EXECUTIVE EDITOR
TOM BREVOORT
ASSEMBLED! 2
THE UNAUTHORIZED GUIDE TO EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES AND THEIR FOES!
BY THE JARVIS HEADS OF
AVENGERSASSEMBLE.NET
EDITED BY
VAN ALLEN PLEXICO
INCLUDES IRON MAN! THOR! CAPTAIN AMERICA! PLUS ULTRON AND KANG!

bit of insightful and humorous commentary on other Avengers- related projects such as ***The Ultimates*** and ***Thunderbolts,*** plus old Marvel movies and more. Nearly twenty different writers contributed chapters, former Marvel novels editor *Keith R A DeCandido* wrote the introduction, and I wrote chapters and edited the whole package. It has raised over two grand for the HERO Initiative charity so far, and is still available through Diamond."

How did Plexico get Marvel editor *Tom Brevoort* involved in the project? "Tom has been part of our Jarvis Heads group for several years now and was a fan of the first volume. So when we decided to do a second volume, we asked him to write the introduction—and he did a great job with it. You might find a surprise or two in what he says there-- I did!

"It's also worth noting that *Kurt Busiek* is a Jarvis Head as well, and he has written a fascinating chapter on his days as ***Avengers*** scribe (alongside *George Perez*) that will appear in next year's third and final volume. (The focus of that book will be on the rest of the Avengers, aside from the Big Three, and the B-list villains.)"

As Plexico mentioned earlier, the Jarvis Heads have chosen a noteworthy charity to benefit from the sales of the book. He explained how they became involved with the HERO Initiative. "When we finished the first volume of ***Assembled!***, we asked the man most associated with the Avengers, *George Perez*, to choose a charity we could donate the profits from the book to. He wisely chose the HERO Initiative, a charity benefitting retired comics pros who do not have long-term health and financial benefits because they did work-for-hire for so many years. The HERO Initiative steps in and assists them when they have dire financial needs.

"In 2008 I appeared at a special panel at HeroesCon in Charlotte, NC, on behalf of the Jarvis Heads, to present the HERO Initiative with a check for $1200.00 from our first year of sales. We'll be handing them another nice check very soon. It's very rewarding to produce a product that fellow Avengers fans enjoy, and to be able to help out some of the very creators who first made us fall in love with these characters and stories in the first place."

Assembled! 2: The Guide to EArth's Mightiest Heroes & Foes, a $21.95 book, is slated for October release.

CSNsider

•At Mini-MegaCon, *Billy Tan* said that he'll be working on a 2010 Marvel Comics event called "The Shadowland," which will involve the street-level characters in the Marvel Universe.

•*Dave Johnson* does the honors for the previously-unannounced 1-for-15 variant cover for ***Deadpool #900*** .

•*Darwyn Cooke* is illustrating the self-contained ***Jonah Hex #50,*** slated for December release. Cooke will also supply the cover art

Continued on page 6

YOU'RE GONNA BE ALL TIED UP TONIGHT, OCK!
JUST ONE MORE SECOND--
--MY TENTACLE WILL FINISH HIM!
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OH NO YA DON'T!
THANKS, LOGAN!
SLASH
STAN LEE LARRY LIEBER 9-4
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YEAH--THESE SLICE-AND-DICERS AIN'T TOO SHABBY!
I'M SURE GLAD YOU'RE ON MY SIDE!
STAN LEE LARRY LIEBER 9-5
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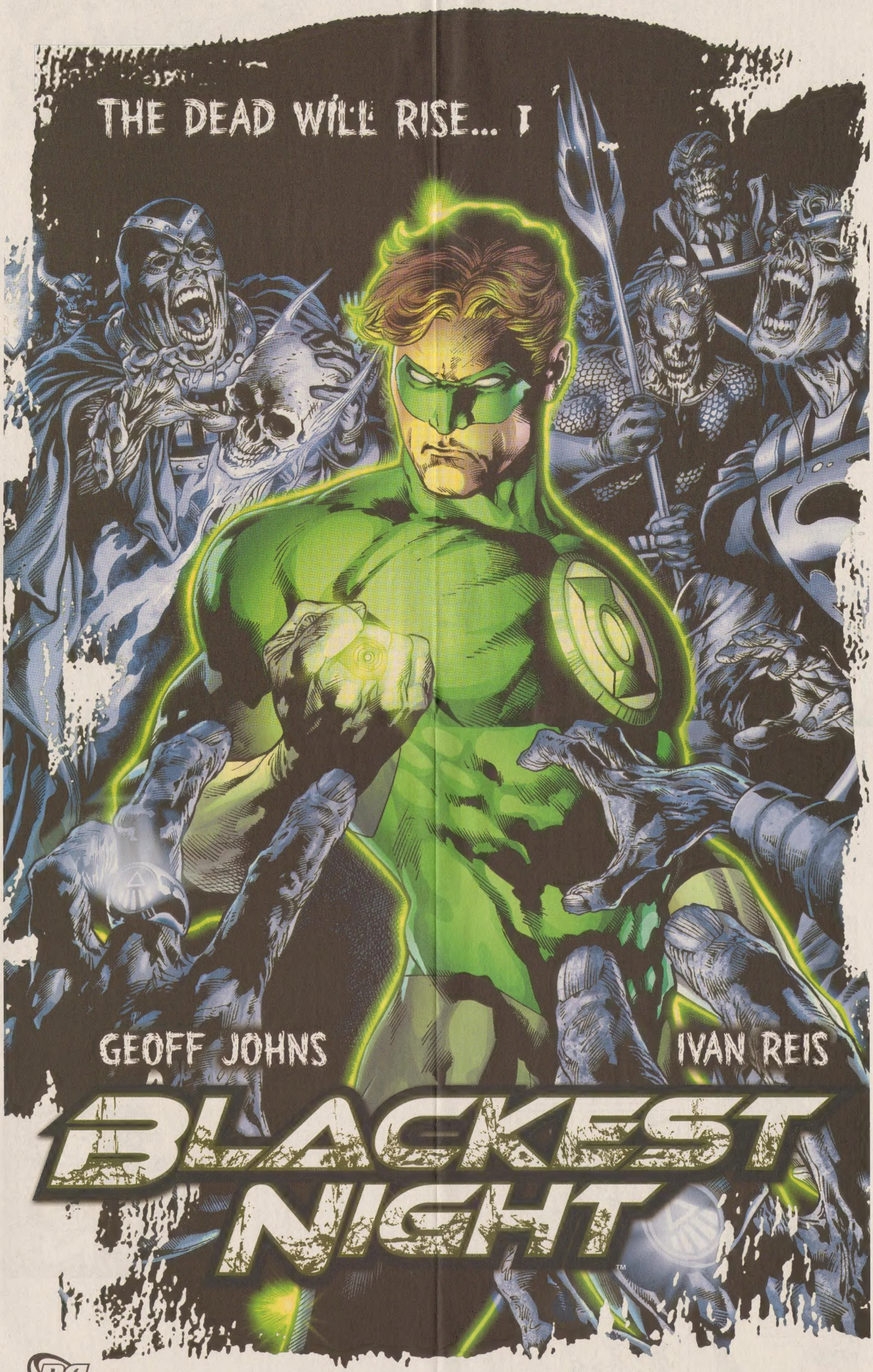

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for both the standard and the variant cover of this 64-page special. "We're working on something special for him and worthy of the fiftieth issue," co-writer *Jimmy Palmiotti* said, adding that "it will feature one of the nastiest, angriest, talented gunslingers out there. And Jonah Hex, as well..."

•*Ed McGuinness* is the artist for one of ***Wolverine Giant Size Old Man Logan #1's*** two previously-unannounced 1-for-20 variant covers, while *Paulo Rivera* supplies the art for the other.

Coming Comics—November Highlights

In the past two issues, ***CSN*** has told you what Dark Horse, DC, Image, and Marvel had to offer for October. Now here's a peek at the highlights from other publishers:

•Wizard adds a trade paperback version of their ***Michael Turner Tribute Edition*** to their November line-up. The 176-page book is filled with hundreds of Turner artistic gems from his all-too-brief career, along with interviews, memories, and more.

•Dynamite may have the most superlative comic adaptation of ***Dracula*** ever created, but Markosia is offering the first-ever trade paperback sequel to *Bram Stoker's* novel that is fully endorsed by the Stoker estate. ***From the Pages of Bram Stoker's Dracula—Harker*** picks up six months after Dracula's death in Transylvania, where a ghostly vision warns the Harkers that the vampire threat is still very real... and that Mina's unborn child is in terrible danger. The book also features an introductions from *Dacre Stoker, Ian Holt,* and *Leslie S. Klinger,* author of ***The Annotated Dracula.***

•*Ben Dunn* blends Victorian detection and martial arts in Antarctic Press's ***Sherlock Ninja: The Curious Case of the Iron Monkey.*** The book begins with a mysterious killer targeting Victorian London's Chinese immigrant community; unable to solve the case on their own, Scotland Yard enlists the aid of a man who is a master of deduction and of ninjitsu. But who is the enigmatic Iron Monkey who seems responsible for the deaths?

•Just in time for the holiday season, *Rod Espinosa* adapts *Charles Dickens'* famous novel in the full-color ***A Christmas Carol*** from Antarctic Press.

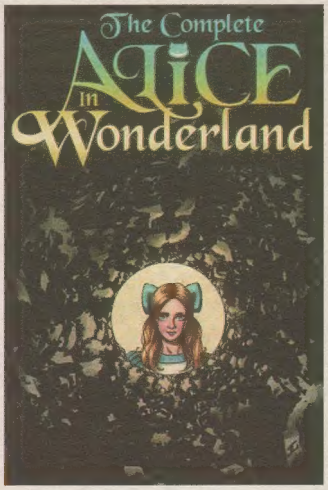
•Where do super-powered college students go to learn the skills they need to become tomorrow's heroes? Epsilon Epsilon Psi, the fraternity better known as ***Hero House,*** that's where! In this graphic novel from Arcana Studio, *Justin Aclin, Ed McGuinness, Mike Dimayuga, & Frank Stone* take readers into the fraternity as the superpowered frat brothers learn that one of their new recruits may be an unwitting spy sent in by those not interested in having superheroes operating on campus...

•Archie Comics reintroduces some of their most offbeat characters in ***Archie & Friends #137,*** the first installment of the two-part "Cosmic Cosmosis" by *Fernando Ruiz.* When meteors from the MLJ Nebula rain down on Riverdale, a cosmic portal into a strange world of anthropomorphic animals, oddball beings, and superpowered heroes. Soon, some of those heroes find their way into Riverdale, and the town finds itself overrun by Captain Sprocket, Cosmo the Merry Martian, Super Duck, Squoimy the Woim, and other strange characters who've decided that Riverdale's a very inviting place indeed!

•Superheroes are worshiped like gods in the world of *Warren Ellis & Garry Gastony's* ***Supergod.*** In this five-part Avatar series, superhumans are the ultimate expression of the Messiah Complex... but what if the heroes have no interest in saving the world?

•Bluewater Press moves from the political world to the literary world with ***Female Force: Stephenie Meyer,*** a oneshot spotlighting the life and accomplishments of the author of the best-selling ***Twilight*** novels.

•Acclaimed British artist *Frank Bellamy* and writer *Michael Butterworth* offer a graphic recounting of the War to End All Wars in ***Frank Bellamy's THe Story of World War I SC,*** a 112-page collection of pieces originally done for England's ***Look & Learn*** magazine.



•*Leah Moore & John Reppion,* authors of the acclaimed ***Complete Dracula*** and ***Sherlock Holmes*** series, turn their attention to *Lewis Carroll's* classic in Dynamite's ***Complete Alice in Wonderland.*** The four-part series adapts both ***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*** and ***Through the Looking Glass,*** adding "The Wasp in a Wig," the lost chapter of the fantastic adventure. Each issue offers 40 pages of story and art, along with bonus material such as script pages, annotations, and excerpts of original text by *Lewis Carroll.*

•*Robin Furth & Tony Shasteen* launch their adaptation of *Stephen King & Peter Straub's* collaboration in November wit the release of Del Rey Comics' ***The Talisman: The Road of Trials #1.*** The premiere issue follows Jack Sawyer into the mysterious realm he once called the Daydreams.

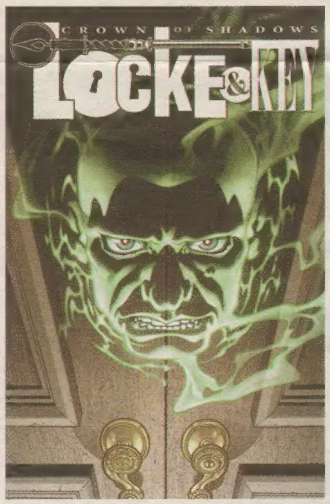
•*Joe Pruett* spotlights the artist of ***Starman*** and ***Ex Machina*** in ***Art & Skullduggery: The Art of Tony Harris,*** a 256-page hardcover from Desperado Press. The upscale art book offers a retrospective, sketches, design art, personal photos, concept notes, and a lavish selection of beautifully reproduced art by the Eisner winning illustrator.

•At the same time, Desperado also collects ***Obergeist,*** the WWII suspense-SF thriller by Harris with writer *Dan Jolley,* in the black and white signed and numbered ***Obergeist: The Essential Edition.***

•***Unclothed Man in the 35th Century AD,*** a new hardcover from Fantagraphics, combines *Dash Shaw's* short stories from ***Mome*** with a selection of storyboards, scripts, and character designs created by Shaw in preparation for a series of original shorts slated to begin airing on IFC in November at about the same time that the book sees release. Shaw tops it all off with an original 20-page story.

•*Brian M. Kane's* long-out-of-print and ultra-collectible ***Prince Valiant Companion*** returns to print in November in the expanded ***Definitive Prince Valiant Companion,*** offered from Fantagraphics in both softcover and hardcover. The book includes a never-before-reprinted newspaper feature from 1949, *Hal Foster's* final interview conducted by *Arn Saba,* an extensive interview with *John Cullen Murphy,* and a new interview with the current ***Prince Valiant*** team of *Gary Gianni & Mark Schultz.* the book also includes a new in-depth article by Kane on Foster's artistic influences, a sixteen-page color section of carefully selected strips, and more.

•*Joe Hill & Gabriel Rodriguez* take readers back into the realm of ***Locke & Key*** with their third series, ***Crown of Shadows.*** Sam Lesser may be dead and gone, but Dodge still has uses for him. The dead know things the living may not, and Sam's restless spirit has had time to discover the thing Dodge wants to know most of all... where to find the key to the black door...



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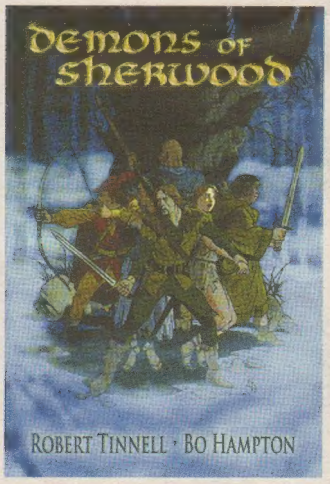
•When a Los Angeles detective finds himself in the middle of a Hollywood mystery that falls way outside the norm, he enlists the help of The Ghoul, a monstrous investigator with a reputation for unlocking the secrets of the outré. *Steve Niles & Bernie Wrightson* take occult detection in a new direction in IDW's ***The Ghoul.***

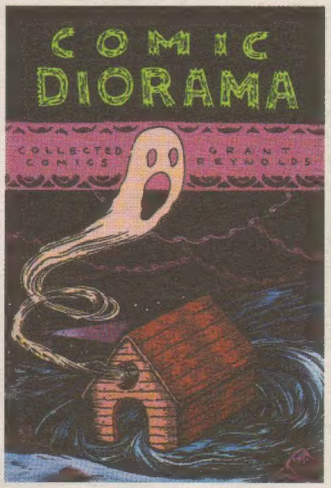
•IDW takes readers into the world of Sony/Screen Gems' 2010 release ***Legion*** in the weekly four-part ***Legion: Prophets.*** The series introduces readers to the Prophets—ordinary people who have yet to understand the incredible powers the possess and the roles that they will play in the apocalyptic events that are about to sweep across the globe.



•*Robert Tinnell & Bo Hampton* offer a very different look at the Robin Hood legend in IDW's ***Demons of Sherwood.*** Twelve years after Robin's rescue of Marian, the intrepid archer is a drunkard who hasn't seen Marian or his merry men in years. Then he gets the news that Marian has been jailed as a witch by the Inquisitor from Rome—but is Robin in proper shape to do anything about it?

•How do *Kevin Eastman & Peter Laird* celebrate the 25th anniversary of the most successful black and white independent in comics history? By reissuing it in color, of course! Mirage's ***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1 Full-Color One-Shot*** spotlights *Steve Lavigne's* all-new color work done for this edition of the book that made comics history.

•*Alan Martin & Rufus Dayglo* present a new look at the former bounty hunter turned outlaw in the original four-part ***Tank Girl: Skidmarks,*** slated for October release from Titan Books. She's settled into a life of drinking, fighting, and getting into all manners of trouble—but her semi-retirement is about to come to an end when her best friend's life is threatened.

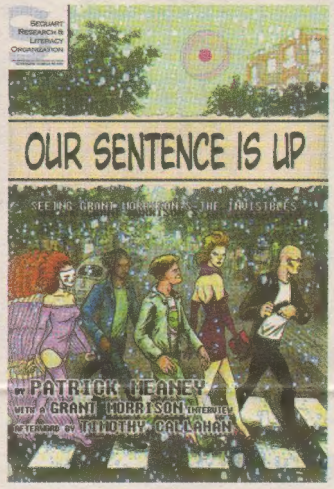


•Top Shelf celebrates the creativity of *Grant Reynolds* in the 48-page ***Comic Diorama,*** a collection of five short tales that range from the lost journals of an explorer-adventurer to the tribulations of a recovering alcoholic who's traded booze for model-building.

•TwoMorrows spotlights the work of the lesser-known Buscema in ***Sal Buscema: Comics' Fast and Furious Artist,*** a 176-page look at the career of one of Marvel's most prolific illustrators.

•Writer and critic *Tony Isabella* spotlights some of comics' most fascinating tales in the 272-page ***1000 Comics You Must Read TP,*** which offers background info and synopses on a thousand books from 1930 to the present, including the reasons each book was chosen for inclusion.

•*Patrick Meaney & Timothy Callahan* offer a look at one of *Grant Morrison's* quirkiest creations in ***Our Sentence Is Up: Seeing Grant Morrison's The Invisibles SC.*** The 372-page softcover explores Morrison's themes and philosophy as it studies the acclaimed Vertigo series; the volume includes a Morrison interview and afterword.



Back to Press

•***Blackest Night #1,*** the year's biggest hit, has sold out of its first printing in spite of huge initial orders and a hefty overprinting. DC is rushing a second printing back to press for arrival in comic shops next week; the new edition (JUL098082) will feature an altered version of the variant cover by *Ethan Van Sciver.*

•***Blackest Night: Tales of The Corps #2*** (JUL098051), with a recolored version of the original cover by *Ed Benes & Rob Hunter,* in stores 9/16.

•***Amazing Spider-Man #602 2nd Printing Variant*** (JUL098071), in stores 9/23.

•***Deadpool #13 2nd Printing Variant*** (JUL098069), in stores 9/23.

•***Ultimate Comics Avengers #1 2nd Printing Variant*** (JUL098058), in stores 9/23.

•***Ultimate Comics spider-Man #1 2nd Printing Variant*** (JUL098057), in stores 9/23.

•***Uncanny X-Men #514 2nd Printing Variant*** (JUL098070), in stores 9/23.

•If you were looking for that ***Kick Ass HC*** that was supposed to reach comic shops this week, you might want to scratch it off your list for the time being: Marvel has cancelled all orders for the book and will resolicit at a future date.

twitter.com/csnsider

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP, LOGAN.
AT LEAST I GOT SOME EXERCISE FOR A CHANGE!
EXIT
STAN LEE LARRY LIEBER 9-8
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BUT HOW ABOUT MJ SHOWIN' UP HERE?
UH-OH! DOES HE SUSPECT SHE'S MY WIFE?
WHAT WAS MJ DOIN' IN DOC OCK'S LAB?
I DON'T KNOW. I THOUGHT YOU KNEW HER.
CAN'T LET HIM LINK HER TO ME!
STAN LEE LARRY LIEBER 9-9
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YEAH, I KNEW HER. MET HER AND HER HUSBAND--
... A WIMP NAMED PETER PARKER.
?

Colors: Ward Batty

Follow *Spider-Man* every week in *Comic Shop News*!